DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 416 468 CS 013 090

AUTHOR Dunston, Pamela J.; Schenk, Rebecca; Headley, Kathy; Ridgeway, Victoria

TITLE National Reading Conference Research Reflections: An Analysis of Twenty Years of Research.

PUB DATE 1997-12-00

NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Reading Conference (Phoenix, AZ, December 3-6, 1997).

PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Data Analysis; Databases; Higher Education; Literature Reviews; Qualitative Research; *Reading Research; Research Design; Research Methodology; Research Utilization; *Scholarship; *Yearbooks

IDENTIFIERS *National Reading Conference (Organization); *Research Trends

ABSTRACT

A study examined 20 years of research represented in the National Reading Conference (NRC) Yearbooks with the purpose of creating an NRC Yearbook database. The study analyzed overall trends in research topics and paradigms used by individuals whose work was reported in the NRC Yearbook between 1975-1995. The analysis was guided by the following questions: What reading research topics were investigated by NRC researchers published in the yearbooks?; and, What research designs and data analysis methodologies were used? A total of 694 research studies were examined. Results indicated that, initially, 79 different topics were listed. After data reduction by categorizing data by topic, 11 major areas of investigation remained, and of those 11 topics, 6 were the most frequently researched: (1) adult/college/family literacy; (2) beginning/early/emergent literacy; (3) comprehension; (4) instruction; (5) students; and (6) teachers. Findings suggest that 7% of the qualitative studies used ethnographic analysis, and 17% reported case study use. Constant comparative analysis was used in 15% of the studies and content analysis in 14%; another 29% of the qualitative studies reported placing data into categories for analysis purposes. Specific analysis procedures could not be determined for 45% of the qualitative studies. (Contains three figures and nine references.) (CR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 416 468

Running head: NRC YEARBOOK ANALYSIS

National Reading Conference Research Reflections:

An Analysis of Twenty Years of Research

Pamela J. Dunston, Rebecca Schenk, Kathy Headley, and Victoria Ridgeway

Clemson University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

P. Dunston

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

CS013090

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Reading Conference, Phoenix, AZ, December 3-6, 1997.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

National Reading Conference Research Reflections: An Analysis of Twenty Years of Research

The National Reading Conference began in 1950 as The Southwest Reading Conference for Colleges and Universities. The organization provided the opportunity for members to analyze and evaluate the organization and administration of post-secondary reading instruction. Within seven years the organization began to reflect diversity in membership and professional interests. Individuals from other levels of education and industry, as well as other regions of the country, began to join the organization. These changes resulted in the organization's name being changed to the National Reading Conference for Colleges and Adults.

Throughout the history of the National Reading Conference (NRC) members have demonstrated interest in reviewing and reporting research related to the field of reading. In the preface of the 1958 annual yearbook Oscar Causey wrote, "One of the main purposes of the Conference is to encourage research in reading and to provide channels through which it may be reported and published." Causey's statement continues to hold true for today's National Reading Conference but the research questions and methods of investigation have changed. Or have they?

Baldwin, Readence, Schumm, and Konopak (1990) analyzed 37 volumes of NRC Yearbooks (1952-1988) in an effort to establish a permanent database that would be accessible to NRC members interested in tracking research trends throughout the history of the organization. They used a basic framework to categorize NRC Yearbook publications. In addition, they examined each paper to determine the specific research topics investigated, subjects/participants, materials, and analyses used in the study. Baldwin, et al. explained the search potential of their database and provided three examples of how it could be used. The purpose of their project was to establish an NRC database. The research project reported here was designed to advance Baldwin, et al.'s work by carrying out a variety of analyses on research published in the NRC Yearbooks.

We were faced with the need to create our own NRC Yearbook database after attempting to obtain Baldwin et al.'s database without success. Due to the enormity of the task, we decided to confine our analysis to a twenty-year time span because, for the most part, the focus of the organization was limited to post-secondary reading instruction and programs prior to 1965 and the quantitative research paradigm was the primary method of investigation prior to the 1980s. In general, we wanted to look at overall trends in research topics and paradigms used by individuals whose work was reported in the NRC Yearbooks between 1975 and 1995. Research papers relating to reading at lower levels of education appeared for the first time in the 1962 conference program and the qualitative research paradigm emerged as a viable method of investigation in the late 1970s. Currently, NRC represents diversity in reading research topics and investigative paradigms at all grade levels, regions, cultures, and nations. For this reason, we decided to begin our analysis with a time period in which NRC had made a move to include diverse educational levels and research paradigms as part of the annual conference. In addition, we wanted to trace the emergence of qualitative research methodologies within the organization. Specifically, the following questions guided our analysis:

1. What reading research topics have been investigated by NRC researchers whose work was published in the annual yearbooks between 1975 and 1995?
2. What research designs and data analysis methodologies were used by these researchers to investigate reading research questions?

Method

Data Source

Twenty-one Yearbooks representing papers presented at the annual meeting of the National Reading Conference between 1975 and 1995 provided data for this analysis. The 21 Yearbooks were randomly assigned to the four authors so that each examined five or six NRC Yearbooks. Only research articles that involved the participation of people were included in the analysis; position papers, presidential addresses, annual reviews of research, invited addresses, test and text analyses were omitted from our analysis.

Data Collection and Analysis

Following the content analysis examples provided by Dillon, O'Brien, Hopkins, Baumann, Humphrey, Pickle, Ridgeway, Wyatt, Wilkinson, Murray, & Pauler (1992); Stahl, & Fisher (1992); Pearson (1992); and Baldwin et al.(1990), we identified six components of interest for the analysis of each article published within a given NRC Yearbook: (1) number of authors, (2) type of paper, (3) primary research topic, (4) population or participant demographics, (5) research design, and (6) analysis procedures used. A grid listing the six components was constructed to guide us in analyzing relevant information for each yearbook article. Training meetings were held to familiarize each evaluator with the grid sheet and procedures for analyzing the Yearbooks. After each evaluator examined one Yearbook, the first author randomly selected and analyzed 10% of the research articles within each Yearbook for interrater reliability. If agreement was less than 85%, differences were resolved in conference and additional training discussions held.

Data from each Yearbook was transferred from the grid sheets to the Panorama (1991) relational database. Once all data were entered into the database, we used printouts to review the research topics. Initially, 79 different topics were listed. We began data reduction by grouping topics that addressed similar populations or aspects of reading. For example, research that investigated adults and college students focused on populations of older readers so these studies were grouped together into one category. Later we added family literacy to the Adult/ College Literacy category because family literacy investigated literacy interactions between adults and children at home or in the community.

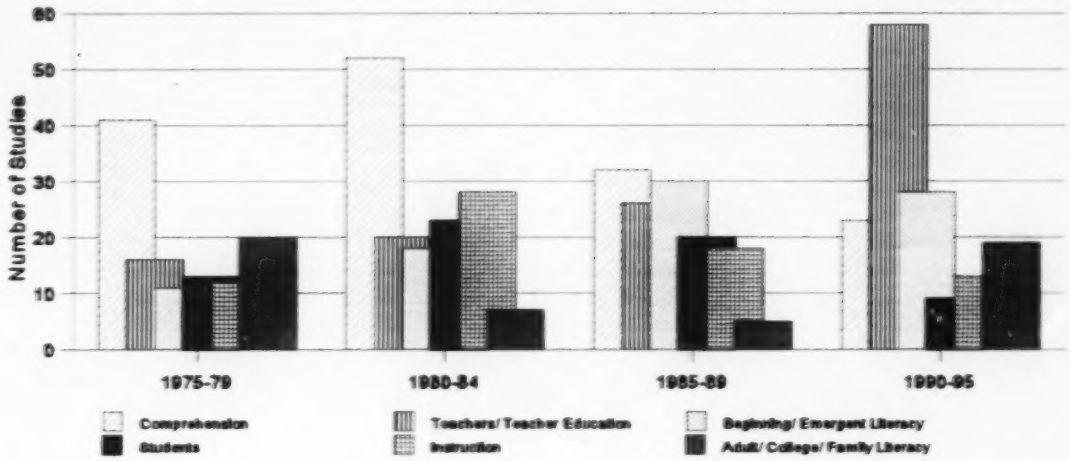
Research investigating comprehension was difficult to categorize because comprehension was usually investigated in connection with another variable such as text, vocabulary, pre-reading strategies, or learning strategies. If changes in reading comprehension were examined as the result of some other manipulated factor, the study was categorized according to the factor under investigation. After four additional passes through the data we could determine no other combinations of research topics; 11 major areas of investigation remained.

Research Topic	Principal Research Focus
Adult/College/Family Literacy	Adult and post-secondary reading or adults (other than educators) interacting with children in literacy events, i.e. storybook reading
Assessment	Students' achievement or teachers' use of assessment

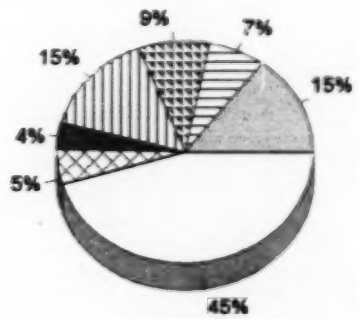
Beginning/ Early/ Emergent Literacy	Literacy development, language acquisition in young children, or children's conceptions of literacy
Comprehension	Students' ability to recall, remember, understand, and/or construct meaning from print
Content Area/ Secondary	Reading in content area courses or secondary education classrooms
Instruction	The efficacy of specific teaching strategies, direct instruction, or the effect of specific instructional programs
Students	Students' metacognition, attitude and perceptions, use of study-learning strategies, or other factors associated with the learner
Teachers	Teacher beliefs and attitudes, classroom practices and effectiveness, and teacher education
Technology/ Materials/ Text	Using technology, teaching materials such as basals, readability, and text features and structure
Word Recognition/ Spelling/Vocabulary	Phonics, decoding, spelling, orthography, and acquisition of vocabulary
Writing/Reading Response	Acquisition of writing skills, development as a writer, and responding to reading materials through writing or discussion

Results

A total of 694 research studies were examined: 189 qualitative studies, 464 quantitative studies, and 41 studies that incorporated both quantitative and qualitative analysis procedures. Each of the 694 research studies was categorized by topic according to the primary research focus. Of the 11 topics of research interest reflected in the 1975-95 NRC Yearbooks, six topics emerged as the most frequently researched over the 20 year time span: adult/college/family literacy; beginning/early/emergent literacy; comprehension; instruction; students; and teachers.



Our second research question was investigated by examining the research design and analysis procedures used in each study in the database. The procedures used to analyze data in qualitative studies were frequently difficult to determine because descriptions of data analysis procedures were often embedded within descriptions of data collected. Seven percent of the qualitative studies examined reported using ethnographic or micro-ethnographic analysis and 17% reported case study as the analysis procedure used. Constant comparative analysis was used in 15% of the studies and content analysis in 14%. In studies where content analysis procedures were used there was not enough information provided for us to determine if the content analysis was quantitative or qualitative. Another 29% of the qualitative studies reported placing data into categories for analysis purposes. In some cases the categories were determined a priori but in other cases categories emerged from the data. Ten studies reported data analysis procedures developed by specific individuals such as Miles and Huberman's concurrent flow of analysis, Mehan Discourse Analysis Framework, Bogdon and Biklen's model of inductive analysis, "the methods of Merriam", and "steps outlined by Tesch." Specific analysis procedures could not be determined for 45% of the qualitative studies.



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Data analysis procedures were more easily determined for the 464 quantitative studies analyzed from the Yearbooks. The most frequently used analysis procedure in quantitative reading research was ANOVA, ANCOVA, and MANOVA (50% of the studies). As shown in Figure 3, other commonly used analysis procedures included t-tests (13%), correlations (12%), and multiple regression (12%). Chi Square (5%) and non-parametric procedures (4%) were used less frequently. In 4% of the studies either an analysis procedure could not be determined or only descriptive statistics were reported. Two quantitative analysis techniques were unique in that each was used only once in the 20 year time span: path analysis (Sadoski, 1984) and LISERL (Lomax, 1984).

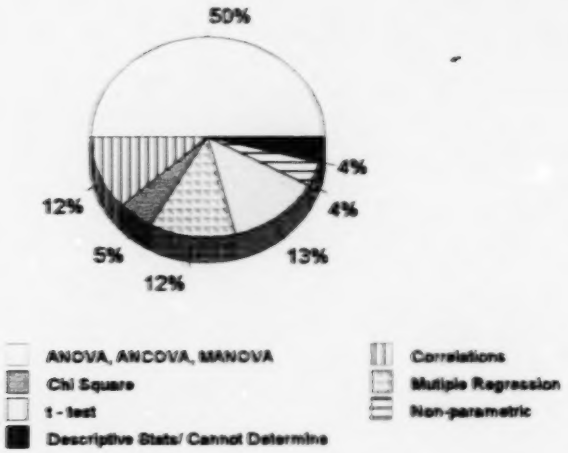


Figure 2.

Discussion and Conclusions

As evidenced by the number of research studies published in the 1975-1995 NRC Yearbooks , the National Reading Conference is a professional organization interested in advancing the field of reading education through research. The memberships' interest in a particular research topic appears to ebb and flow over time yet several topics have been consistently investigated year after year. For example, NRC began as a group of professionals interested in post-secondary reading instruction and our analysis suggests that this topic continued to be an area of research interest through 1995. Between 1975 and 1979, 20 studies on adult and college literacy were published in the Yearbooks. Although the topic was investigated less intensely during the 1980s, only 12 studies were published from 1980-1990, renewed interest was apparent in the publication of 19 studies from 1990-1995.

The apparent ebb and flow of research topics may reflect our decision making as we collapsed categories within the database. The resurgence in adult and college reading research from 1990-95 may be due to our decision to incorporate family literacy into the category. In addition, adult/college reading and content area/secondary reading research trend analysis may be affected by our decision to group study skills and learning strategies according to the locus of control. Although much of the research in the area to study/learning strategies was conducted with secondary and post-secondary students, we decided that if students were the locus of control, the study would be grouped in the Student category. Strategies used to improve

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

classroom instruction and enhance students' learning from instruction were grouped in the Teacher category because teachers were the locus of control. Studies that investigated the effect of a particular study/learning strategy were placed in the Instruction category. Therefore, trends reflected in our analysis may not match the trends of a specific area of inquiry.

Findings from this content analysis of NRC Yearbooks published between 1975-1995 are limited by our ability to identify the focus of the research, classify each study in a particular topic area, and identify the analysis procedures used by the researchers. Although we believe our work provides a sense of research topic and paradigm trends in NRC, we recognize that other researchers may disagree with some aspects of our work. However, our experiences with this project lead us to believe that interpretations of research can and will vary among consumers. For example, Baldwin et al. (1990) reported Lorentz and Coker (1978) as the first authors to use qualitative research techniques. We credit Anabel Newman (1977) as the first reading researcher to use qualitative techniques by interviewing students and parents and providing a "heuristic look" at underachieving first-grade students in her 12 year study. We did not classify Lorentz and Coker's article as qualitative because we considered the research design and analysis procedures in addition to methods of data collection. Lorentz and Coker used an observation checklist to collect part of their data but they quantified the observations and analyzed their data using multiple regression.

References

Baldwin, R. S., Readence, J. E., Schumm, J. S., & Konopak, J. P. (1990). The NRC *Yearbooks* database. In J. Zutell, & S. McCormick (Eds.), Literacy theory and research: Analysis from multiple paradigms (pp.73-80). Chicago, IL: National Reading Conference.

Dillon, D. R., O'Brien, D. G., Hopkins, C. J., Baumann, J. F., Humphrey, J. W., Pickle, J. M., Ridgeway, V. G., Wyatt, M., Wilkinson, C., Murray, B., & Pauler, S. M. (1992). Article content and authorship trends in The Reading Teacher 1948-1991. Reading Teacher, 45, 362-368.

Lomax, R. (1984). A component processes model of reading comprehension development: A comparison of normal and learning-disabled children. In J. A. Niles, & L. A. Harris (Eds.), Changing perspectives on research in reading/language processing and instruction (pp.308-316). Rochester, NY: National Reading Conference.

Lorentz, J. L., & Coker, H. (1978). Observed patterns of teacher-pupil classroom behavior as predictors of student growth in reading. In P. D. Pearson, & J. Hansen (Eds.), Reading: Disciplined inquiry in process and practice (pp.16-19). Clemson, SC: National Reading Conference.

Newman, A. P. (1977). Twelve year study of pupils who were underachieving in reading first grade. In P. D. Pearson (Ed.), Reading: Theory, research and practice (pp.88-91). Clemson, SC: National Reading Conference.

Panorama [Computer Database Software]. (1991). Huntington Beach, CA: ProVUE Development.

Pearson, P. D. (1992). RT remembrance: The second 20 years. Reading Teacher, 45, 378-385.

Sadoski, M. (1984). Text structure, imagery, and affect in the recall of a story by children. In J. A. Niles, & L. A. Harris (Eds.), Changing perspectives on research in reading/language processing and instruction (pp.308-316). Rochester, NY: National Reading Conference.

Stahl, N. A., & Fisher, P. J. L. (1992). RT remembrance: The first 20 years. Reading Teacher, 45, 370-376.